

Praise for Timothy S. Johnston's *The Savage Deeps*

“Reading *The Savage Deeps* is like watching a movie ... mesmerizing ... Torpedoes, mines, imploded subs, and bodies litter the ocean floor ... Johnston is an author skilled in bringing life to his characters through dialogue, engaging readers’ emotions by their behaviors and thinking, and creating brilliant settings, all of which play out like scenes in a movie.”

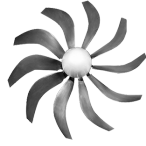
— Five Stars from Readers’ Favorite

“*The Savage Deeps* delivers on every level.”

— SFCrowsnest

“*The Savage Deeps* is like a futuristic *Das Boot* with a lot of intense action and some interesting technology ... full of spine-tingling thrills ... I give *The Savage Deeps* a five star rating.”

— A-Thrill-A-Week



FATAL DEPTH

THE RISE OF OCEANIA



Fitzhenry & Whiteside

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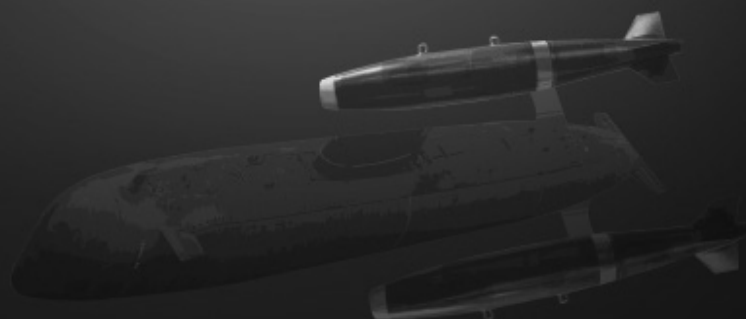


TIMOTHY S. JOHNSTON



FATAL DEPTH

THE RISE OF OCEANIA



Books by Timothy S. Johnston

The Rise of Oceania

THE WAR BENEATH
THE SAVAGE DEEPS
FATAL DEPTH

The Tanner Sequence

THE FURNACE
THE FREEZER
THE VOID

Timeline of Events

2020

Despite the fact that global warming is the primary concern for the majority of the planet's population, still little is being done.

2055

Shipping begins to experience interruptions due to flooded docks and crane facilities. World markets fluctuate wildly.

2061

Rising ocean levels swamp Manhattan shore defenses and disrupt Gulf Coast oil shipping; financial markets in North America become increasingly unstable due to flooding.

2062-2065

Encroaching water pounds major cities such as Mumbai, London, Miami, Jakarta, Tokyo, and Shanghai. The Marshall Islands, Tuvalu, and the Maldives disappear. Refugee problem escalates in Bangladesh; millions die.

2069

Shore defenses everywhere are abandoned; massive numbers of people move inland. Inundated coastal cities become major disaster areas.

2071-2072

Market crash affects entire world; economic depression looms. Famine and desertification intensifies.

2073

Led by China, governments begin establishing settlements on continental shelves. The shallow water environment proves ideal for displaced populations, aquaculture, and as jump-off sites for mining ventures on the deep ocean abyssal plains.

2080

The number of people living on the ocean floor reaches 100,000.

2088

Flooding continues on land; the pressure to establish undersea colonies increases.

2090 Continental shelves are now home to twenty-three major cities and hundreds of deep-sea mining and research facilities. Resources harvested by the ocean inhabitants are now integral to national economies.

2093 Led by the American undersea cities of Trieste, Seascape, and Ballard, an independence movement begins.

2099 The CIA crushes the independence movement.

2128 Over ten million now populate the ocean floor in twenty-nine cities.

2129 Tensions between China and the United States, fueled by competition over The Iron Plains and a new Triestrian submarine propulsion system, skyrocket. The USSF occupies Trieste following The Second Battle of Trieste.

Winter, 2130 Trieste Mayor Truman McClusky begins a new fight for Independence against the United States. With new deep-diving technology, he defeats French and US warships in battle in the Mid-Atlantic Ridge, killing Captain Franklin P. Heller and sinking a hundred USSF submarines.

“The hazards of colonizing the ocean floor exist in every possible corner of the watery world, regardless of depth. The slightest breach, caused either by design or manufacturing flaw—or perhaps by weapon—is likely to spell certain doom to the colonists below. Water is a heavy blanket, but it is not comforting.

It is relentless.”

— Frank McClusky, Freedom Fighter and
once Mayor of Trieste

2130 AD

Prelude: The Weapon

Location: USSF ATLANTIC HQ
Norfolk, Virginia, United States

Latitude: 36° 56' N
Longitude: 76° 17' W
Time: 0825 hours
Date: 18 April 2130

THE ALARM BLARED FROM THE SONAR console just as USSF Lieutenant Cathy Lentz was lifting the mug of coffee to her lips for the first sip of the morning. It was still early, the sun was rising over the Atlantic waters to the east, and the sky was a brilliant blue. Tearing her gaze from the panoramic floor-to-ceiling viewport, she shot a glance to the display. There, on the holographic image, a brilliant white orb glowed ominously only two kilometers east of the United States coast.

She half choked as she pulled the mug away.

Damn. She'd just burned her lips.

She thrust the thought aside immediately. The large sonar return had puzzled her.

The United States Submarine Fleet HQ was located at former Naval Station Norfolk, Virginia on the Hampton Roads peninsula—Sewell's Point. Originally built for the US Navy in 1917, the USSF had converted it for exclusive use in the late Twenty-first Century. Housing over eighteen kilometers of pier space on the water and an additional thirty *under* the water, the facility was the single most important base for the USSF in the Atlantic. It serviced and maintained an immense fleet of over a thousand warsubs and countless other support craft. Hundreds of buildings containing engineering divisions, personnel offices, medical facilities, and even nuclear

plant maintenance stretched across acres of land. Roads connected all the buildings on the surface, but of course there were few people currently on them. Just a few trucks and topside dwellers walking around performing routine work on the asphalt and building exteriors.

Most of the base personnel were *inside* at that moment, and they would remain that way. Every building and facility in the area maintained a constant four atmospheres of pressure, standardized across the world for ocean dwellers for easy travel to the undersea colonies. If the base didn't do this, it would be a nightmare of logistics and wasted time as crewmen sat waiting in decompression chambers. Umbilicals connected warships to buildings, and USSF sailors moved around the base in this manner. The fiberglass tunnels were either above ground, on the ground, or under the ground. Each building and tunnel was airtight to maintain pressure throughout the base.

Due to rising waters decades earlier, the USSF nearly had to evacuate the base and pick an alternate location farther inland. Instead, the US Army Corps of Engineers had built a massive seawall surrounding Sewell's Point, which held the waters back. From Lentz's current perspective in Sea Traffic Control, five stories up with an excellent view of the entire base and the ocean beyond Willoughby Bay, the wall was there, rising from the water and stretching far to the north and south, connecting Virginia to Delaware at Wise Point, offering them the barest hint of protection. As much as stone and concrete could give, anyway. The rising waters due to Global Warming were inexorable. Nations could only adjust their own structures and keep up with the advance. Water would top the wall eventually, unless of course the Army Corps added to it within the next five years.

Lentz's duties that day were the same as every other day since she'd arrived at the base three years previously: she monitored the sonar screens to watch for incoming subs. Her team of five, currently sitting at consoles in the small room, studied signals from the east continuously, backing up the monotonous work of computers as every noise from every bit of sea life and mechanics made its way to a vast sonar array, through fiber optic cables, and to that very room. Lentz had spent some time on warships and in the three US underwater colonies of Trieste, Ballard, and Seascope before the USSF transferred her to HQ in Norfolk. She had a grim sense of foreboding

that her career was on a downward path. Instead of moving into larger and larger warsubs and working in their sonar divisions, she had now ended up on land—*on land!*—which for an officer in the USSF was not ideal. Lentz wanted to be in the water.

Under the water.

Cruising the world at immense depths, extending the power and grasp of the United States to the new and exciting frontier, listening to the sounds of ventilation systems and ballast pumps and the ocean sliding past a thick titanium-alloy hull.

But she was in Norfolk, in a pressure-controlled building, watching the ocean and sun out the viewport and staring at a sonar screen. To make things worse, she couldn't even go outside Atlantic USSF HQ to feel the sun on her skin.

Commanding officers had repeatedly told her that she just wasn't calm enough in tense situations. That she panicked easily.

She pulled herself back to the situation. The sonar was ringing, and she stared in fascination at the contact on the screen, not fully comprehending the situation.

"What is it?" Seaman Collins muttered at her. He had said it with an air of nonchalance. After all, alarms weren't rare. Whenever any unidentified contact appeared off the coast, the alert ended up at that room, for that team to determine its source. Usually it was nothing. An errant boat. A fishing trawler, perhaps.

"It's—it's—" Lentz trailed off, staring at the contact. *That can't be right*, she thought. The label above the glowing white cloud showed its speed, depth, and exact location. "It's traveling at over 450 kilometers per hour," she whispered.

"Say again?" Collins face was a mask of confusion as he stared up from his own console, the glow sending ghostly shadows up his face. "Underwater? It's a sub?"

"You heard me," she snapped in reply. She glanced again at the image. The contact was only two kilometers from the seawall and closing fast. It would impact within seconds. But how did it get so close without an array detecting it or a warsub intercepting it? *And how the fuck was it going so*

goddamned fast?

An instant later she slammed her hand on the red base master-alarm button. For emergencies only, and she'd never had to hit it.

She had no choice.

She stared out the viewport in shock. The seawall was there, a white line above the blue ocean.

But not for long.

—••—

CALLS WERE BEGINNING TO COME IN now, most of them frantic.

Most recently on the base, the mysterious loss of nearly a hundred warsubs somewhere in the Mid-Atlantic Ridge had consumed Lentz's commanding officers for days. But now that she had hit the alarm, they were wondering just what the hell was going on. They had their protocols, she thought. They should just follow them, lock the base down, and wait for instructions.

From her.

The sonar was showing the contact now only two hundred meters from the wall. The white glow coming from it was incredible, an indication of the immense sound the vessel emitted. Usually sonar returns were mere points of light, a result of the stealth capabilities of most subs designed to contain as much noise as possible. This vessel didn't seem to care.

Then Lentz noticed its specifications.

And she swore.

"It's huge," she gasped.

"Say again?" Collins asked.

She shot a look at him. He still didn't understand what the hell was going on.

"Why'd you hit the alarm?"

She turned back to the display.

The impact was an instant away.

The vessel slowed to a full stop. It was a more abrupt deceleration than she'd ever witnessed. Then again, she wasn't used to seeing a ship travel so

fast underwater. Perhaps it was using a supercavitating drive, she reminded herself. She'd been hearing rumors about that technology for the past year.

A screech sounded from the display an instant before programmed algorithms shut it down.

The screen flared white as the mysterious vessel emitted a sound louder than the sonar arrays were prepared to handle.

The sonar net had just shut itself off to protect its delicate equipment.

Was that deliberate? Lentz asked herself. *Subs are supposed to be quiet.* She frowned as she studied the screen.

It was like watching a train wreck, she realized dimly. She understood what was happening, but things were moving too fast. There was nothing she could do.

"Look at that!" Seaman Bishop cried out. She was pointing out the viewport toward the seawall.

Lentz squinted. There was something rising on the other side of it. The white concrete was in silhouette now, with blue water *behind* it, a delicate line tracing across the scene from north to south.

From Virginia to Delaware.

"Oh fuck," she groaned.

Tsunami.

—••—

BUT IT DIDN'T MAKE SENSE. THERE was no tectonic zone this close to the coast. There hadn't been a quake. There wasn't even a tsunami warning system in the Atlantic. The most dangerous area of the world for seismic events was the Pacific Rim, she thought. Not the fucking Atlantic coast!

And then, right before her eyes, the seawall holding back the might of the ocean gave way.

—••—

SHE REALIZED WITH A PIT OF hot fear in her gut what had happened.

"It's an attack," she said. Then louder, for the first time during incident,

which had now only lasted thirty seconds, she shrieked, "We're under attack, goddammit!"

When the seawall gave way, the ocean wouldn't just swamp USSF HQ. It would flood the entire coastal area of Virginia.

There were millions of people in the water's path. People who lived in Norfolk would just be the beginning. Hell, Portsmouth was downstream.

Lentz scrambled to grab the mic and she pulled it savagely to her mouth. "How do I do an all-call?" she yelled. She'd never had to do it before. No one on her team answered. They were standing in half crouches, frozen in place as they had been rising from their consoles to stare out the window at the scene before them.

Below the tower, land personnel were running from the piers. But there was no place for them to go.

The water would catch them.

It was just a matter of time.

—••—

FINALLY, LENTZ LOCATED THE BUTTON AND pushed it with so much force she cut her index finger on the metal edge. She ignored the blood. "Listen to me!" she cried. She had given in to terror now, there was no containing her fear.

Or her fate.

"Listen!" she continued. "We're under attack. The seawall is crumbling. There's a massive ship out there . . ." It was all she could manage. She dropped the mic and stared out the viewport.

—••—

THE SEAWALL, TWENTY METERS WIDE AND thirty meters deep, rooted to the bedrock below and reinforced with two-inch metal rebar, had held the rising waters back for decades. It had cost hundreds of millions of dollars and only protected the coastline along Virginia at USSF HQ Command. Other defenses protected other areas of the country, such as New York and

Washington, but the government had abandoned most places and allowed them to flood under nature's merciless onslaught. It had been an exercise in triage. They couldn't afford to save everything. There wasn't enough money for that, for the economy was suffering now too. Save the most important places, let the others flood. People can move.

But now the seawall was under severe stress. The weight of trillions of liters of water pushed against the structure in a sudden compression wave.

Nature was violent, but not like this.

Concrete fractured at the first stresses. Rebar bent. The ocean began to worm its way in.

Water is relentless.

First the ocean began to flow through minor cracks that had existed for years but which the engineers had said were not important enough to fix immediately.

The cracks widened as the wave pushed. They expanded slightly and more water found its way in.

The pressure increased.

There was no holding it back now.

Trickles grew to streams grew to torrents grew to a flood.

But it wasn't enough. Not yet. It wouldn't cause enough damage.

That would come within a minute.

—••—

THE OCEAN ROSE RAPIDLY ON THE leeward side of the wall. Water flooded in and waves that always lapped at the eighteen kilometers of piers quickly climbed the steel and washed across the docks. Land crew were sprinting from moored vessels, water at their ankles and moving upward fast. Waves flooded Massey Hughes Drive and Rodgers Ave, which were right on the coast. Just south of them were the buildings, hangars, drydocks, and facilities of the base.

Vehicles were idling motionless in the streets now, abandoned. Water coursed around their tires and began to carry them away, down the streets, crashing them into each other and into the structures. Glass shattered,

horns blared, and metal wrenched under the stress.

Lieutenant Cathy Lentz watched in horror as the water continued to flood in. Dread filled her. She could only stare, openmouthed, at the scene. Still, she thought, it wasn't the end of the world. Engineers could rebuild the seawall. Pumps could remove the water. Things could be fixed.

Then they would figure out just who the hell had done—
Then the bomb detonated.

—••—

IT WAS A NUCLEAR-TIPPED TORPEDO. Fired from a stern tube of the departing ship that was now powering away at over 400 kph. But the sound disruption was continuing, and forensic investigators wouldn't uncover this detail until days after the destruction of Atlantic USSF HQ at Norfolk Base.

No sonar could tell precisely what was occurring at that exact moment because of all the noise.

The bomb detonated underwater at the base of the seawall halfway between Virginia Beach and Delaware at Wise Point, at the inlet from the ocean into Norfolk. The water amplified the blast, as it does with underwater detonations, and the last retaining force of the wall finally gave way.

The sea flooded in, shoving enormous blocks of rubble aside and tearing through the rebar—and it wasn't just a trickle. It was a massive wave, caused not just by the weight of the ocean, but of the nuclear blast.

The bomb's yield wasn't huge—it wasn't even a hydrogen bomb—but it was enough. Just.

The enemy had calculated it perfectly, based on the seawall's specs—stolen years earlier—and tests on the concrete itself surreptitiously performed by agents under the cover of darkness.

A wave fifty meters high was on its way to the base.

—••—

LENTZ SHIELDED HER EYES WITH AN outstretched hand as the blast rose from the ocean, and a cascade of water began to rain down on the base.

“Holy fuck!” she cried out. “It’s going to—”

Before she could finish, the wave hit the first line of piers.

The advancing water tossed the boats like toys. They banged into the docks, and ropes mooring them in place snapped under tremendous pressure. Some capsized immediately, others were pushed aside like so much rubbish in a giant’s hand.

The water hit the first building and—

The windows fronting the water blew inward as the wave hit them.

A choking gasp worked its way up Lentz’s throat. The buildings at the base were at four atms. If the pressure bled out to the environment . . .

“Oh no,” she gasped.

Her heart strobed.

The atmospheric pressure was constant so crew and officers could come and go easily. But with the viewports blown out, it meant the personnel would instantly go from four atmospheres to one.

And they would all experience The Bends.

She grabbed the mic frantically to warn them—

But then the water hit the base of her tower.

The Sea Traffic Control tower that she monitored.

She was in charge there.

Lentz swallowed but her throat was too dry. She’d just witnessed the destruction of Atlantic USSF HQ.

And any personnel who could not get to emergency shelters to maintain their pressure were not going to survive.

No one had anticipated a scenario of this sort.

Viewports in the lower levels exploded into the tower. The air inside the control room flash-condensed as pressure exploded outward. Lentz stared in horror around her as she covered her mouth and struggled to hold her breath.

But it was no use.

Bubbles were fizzing on her tongue.

Her heart fluttered as she staggered toward the stairs that led down to the shelter. Dizziness overcame her and she reached out to grab the handhold, but she missed it and fell against the concrete wall. The sound of

Coming Soon
from Timothy S. Johnston and
Fitzhenry & Whiteside

AN ISLAND OF LIGHT

